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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

Top Secret

T 40

8 July 1969

State Department review completed

8 July 1969

Central Intelligence Bulletin

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Saudi Arabia: King Faysal is pessimistic about prospects for an acceptable Middle East settlement.

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SAUDI ARABIA: KING FAISAL IS EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE CHANCES THAT THE GREAT POWERS WILL BE ABLE TO BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST IMPASSE ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARABS.

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FAYSAL LAPSED INTO A STATE OF DEEP GLOOM AFTER BEING BRIEFED BY THE US AMBASSADOR ON 2 JULY ON THE STATUS OF THE TWO- AND FOUR-POWER TALKS. HE INSISTED THAT RECENT US PROPOSALS FOR A SETTLEMENT ARE SLANTED TOWARD ISRAEL AND SHOW NO SENSITIVITY FOR THE ARAB VIEWPOINT. FAYSAL CHARGED THAT THE US IDEA FOR SOLVING THE REFUGEE PROBLEM--WHICH DOES NOT ALLOW FOR UNRESTRICTED RETURN--IS CONTRARY TO FREQUENTLY REITERATED UN RESOLUTIONS GIVING REFUGEES THE RIGHT TO RETURN TO THEIR FORMER HOMELAND. HE INSISTED THAT ALL THE REFUGEES MUST BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL HOMES IF THEY WISH.

FAYSAL HAS BEEN KNOWN TO OVERDRAMATIZE OCCASIONALLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF HIS AUDIENCE, BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT HE IS GENUINELY CONCERNED THAT AN 'HONORABLE' SOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM BE FOUND. SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS, BUT ITS SUPPORT FOR ANY SOLUTION IS IMPORTANT. THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO IN THE CASE OF JERUSALEM, AS FAYSAL REGARDS HIMSELF AS THE GUARDIAN OF ALL MUSLIM HOLY PLACES.

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